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Puppets in psychotherapy

“Puppets have a heart and brains” – a girl

- The introductory part of the article discusses the symbolic significance of play in the development of the individual and in the development of art and culture. Puppets produced personally by the author from wood are used in psychotherapy and education. Playing with puppets mirrors family relationships, and unconscious conflicts are symbolised. Several sessions in which puppets were the basic means of communication are described.

Key words: play, puppets, creativity, children psychotherapy

PUPPETS AND PLAY

Child psychotherapy has its specific features. In analysing adults the therapist mainly relies on speech, and communicates with children through play. Play is a form of the child's message. The search for its sources will take us to early childhood, into the period of development of the self.

Winnicott (1971) believes there is a transition space in which the child's play takes place. Here the therapist acts like a mother blessing everything the child produces – whether it is a sound, play, a smile, or body movement. In this boundless space the child's and the mother's (the therapist's in the therapeutic situation) experience blend in different systems: child-mother, family-therapist. Therefore, the therapist's first and basic task is to establish communication, but the language of communication is established by the patient.

In the therapy of one and the same child we often come across various aspects of play – from simple functional play to more complex symbolic or associative play.

The development of the conceptual opinion creates the conditions for experiencing oneself as a separate being and for experiencing others. In the beginning the child reconstructs events and objects (close beings in the child's environment) by remembering them. The phase of direct imitation of adults is replaced by the phase of deferred imitation. Symbols develop out of joint activities. In this way the child becomes capable of symbolising and engaging in symbolic play. All that would not be possible without the mutual interaction between the child and the parents (adults), without their patience, their steadiness and love with which they protect the nascent self from vulnerability and depression.

In all this play is of vast importance. It takes place in the space "in-between", it is not only in the child or only in the mother, or beyond them, but stimulates instead the shaping of the child's inner world. By playing the mother enables the child to discover the world, and gives the child accessibility to the world of objects and persons. Love and patience stimulate the development of the child's self-confidence and confidence in his/her abilities, and play, because of the dose of tension which it contains, at the same time paves the way for the later ability of concentration. Symbolic play is a sign that the child has begun to experience himself/herself as a distinct being and that he/she is capable of distinguishing persons, as confirmed best by hide-and-seek play. Throwing play, "peek-a-boo", hide-and-seek, indicate the development of senso-motoric intelligence: the child begins to perceive the patterns of space, time and causality. Joint play of adults and children is also essential for the building of later social relationships, for the ability of communication.

In play involving dolls/puppets we recognise some of these ancient forms of expression. It is precisely symbolic play that tells us that the child has reached a specific period in the development of object relations, that he/she is capable of imagining, creating symbols, attributing significance to things or changing their significance while playing. Symbolic play is important both for the development of the individual and for socio-cultural development. Briefly, it serves communication with others and with oneself, connects prior and current experience, but also anticipates the future, connects the unconscious, the preconscious and the conscious, and stimulates the development of psychic function. Later on art, one of the paths for the integration of personality, develops out of symbolic play. This is why Winnicott (1971) places emphasis on play as a link connecting inner reality and the individual relation to external reality, prior and current experience, the unconscious and the preconscious,

and stimulates the development of psychic functions. Play is also the space for discovering oneself in a creative way. Therefore, creativity is not a substitute for unrealised instinctive goals (sublimation), but the essential ingredient of our life, part of the core of our being. “Of course, the creative stimulus can be regarded as such, it is indispensable for the artist wishing to produce a work of art, but it is equally present in *each of us* – the newborn baby, the child, the young person, an adult or an old person... This creative look appears alike in a retarded child enjoying breathing and in an architect wishing to construct something and thinking about the material he will use, so that his stimulus is given shape and form, and so that the world can witness his work” (Winnicott as quoted by Supek 1857: 52). Maybe Ivan’s play – the popular early childhood fingerplay - can help us in searching for personal experience and the experience of others. Once a week we played with refugee children in a play-room situated in the attic of a run-down Zagreb hotel. Ivan is five years old; he is a shy and terrified child. I tried to approach him. I formed with my hands a bird flying above him, imitated at the same time the bird’s singing, a song full of joy over a nice day and meeting with the boy. But the flight did not last long: Ivan shot the bird with an imaginary gun with the comment that the bird would have to land on his palms because of its wounded wing. After that he treated it so that it could fly again, then he wounded and treated it again. The play was repeated with some variations. Every time he would tell me, while playing, a story about his grandfather with whom he often used to go to the woods, early in the morning, and listen to the birds in the meadows and woods close to the village from where his family had fled. He loved his grandfather, but he died of cancer while in exile. He says he is occasionally mad at him, but more often he is sad. The same mixed feelings could also be discerned in his play, equally with regard to the bird and to myself. Later on Ivan developed increasingly more complex games and, with the help of his peers and adult fellow players, went through his and his family’s traumatic experience. For Ivan that was the first encounter with simple puppets. The play in which the hand symbolised a bird was actually a microdrama. But, was that Ivan’s first encounter with hands symbolising something or was he earlier, in the earliest childhood, familiar with fingerplay? Maybe his beloved grandfather played with Ivan’s fingers, rhythmically pronouncing verses such as:

“Five fat peas in a pea pod pressed,
One grew, two grew, so did all the rest.
They grew and grew,
And did not stop...”

or some other nursery rhyme.

Fingerplay and rhymes belongs to the earliest personal experience and scene experience, to the games combining the symbolic and senso-motoric play of early childhood. Without them, we can freely say, there would be no personal development or development of the individual's culture. Play combines the visual and the auditive, contact and movement. It supports the development of the self and the emergence of the child from its symbiosis with the mother.

In fingerplay the fingers are personalised and, more often than not, they symbolise the family. In my therapeutic practice I have used children's fingers: ever finger would be a family member. By playing with fingers the child would play at family relationships: the thumb was usually the "black sheep" as it is separated from the others, and the little finger the family pet.

Fingerplay is an introduction to possible small puppet shows. In their book *Fingerplay* (1996), two puppeteers, Igor Cvetko and Jelena Sitar, proceed from fingerplay and provide suggestions for staging small shows. Fingerplay is the world's treasure and the source of later puppet shows.

WHAT IS A PUPPET?

Any object, but also any part of the body, can be a puppet. In order to become that, they must meet certain requirements: they must be enriched by a sign, movement and, possibly, speech. Verbal speech is not indispensable. If the puppeteer uses preverbal speech, play then resembles a simple version of pantomime and its sources lie in the early child-environment communication.

I started dealing with puppet therapy (Fig. 1/p. 323) owing to some kind of impotence in establishing communication with an autistic boy by usual means. I managed to interrupt his non-communicative ritual by "amazing" him with a swallowing paper fish. This "sense of wonder", as poets would call it, changed the form of communication. Many years elapsed since and I played many shows with my little fellow players, but one this has remained the same: the initial situation, the first encounter with the child, when I try not to know anything. I think that this initial ignorance is a good basis for any communication because it offers an encounter of different experiences. This explains the charm of psychotherapy, and of any autochthonous encounter. This is why the first session is extremely important. Whether or not the child will come out of his/her shell, create and act a play depends on the initial

encounter. If the child is to believe puppet play the therapist also, conditionally, has to believe the puppet magic, the magic of movement, the magic play of the line in the visual expression. If he cannot do that, if he doesn't know how to or cannot establish communication with the child in himself, the child – fellow player - will not believe him either. The therapist must know how to animate any puppet he puts on his hand, how to interact with it and, at the same time, express with it the point which regards the child, speak about the child's problem, gently or perhaps ironically, but always with understanding. The child will accept play if he/she feels that the therapist has understood him/her. The understanding can be expressed through movement, mimicking, gesture or voice. However, that movement, play, sketch or drawing must always suggest a more complex communication which has already taken place between the child and a person close to the child. That is the only way to build a new experience with new persons, to be welcome in the adventure of life. Among other things, play helps the child to turn – as with an imaginary hourglass – the irrational into the rational, the imaginary experience into real experience.

Puppets are very old. In terms of civilisation, they date back to ancient times when they “kept company” with masks; some even think that puppets may have originated from masks. Both the mask and the puppet were used to master demons, those within people and those without, in order to conceal oneself, acquire power and act. However, as Mrkšić (1975) says, puppets gradually lost their demonic power but kept their lyrical features and humour. They travelled from fair to fair, appeared in streets, homes, theatres and, finally, even strayed into therapeutic facilities. Their individual origin is to be found in early hide-and-seek and symbolic play.

Since children like to act out stories or introduce into their play characters found in fables, the therapist needs puppets representing good, nasty, small, cunning, unreal etc. characters. Characters often undergo transformation in fables, but they are not individualised and complete. It is this incompleteness that permits continuous change of the fable or addition to it. Because of this it is like running water: it has its own source, course and mouth. Only the source and the mouth are clearly and accurately defined, all the rest can be changed. Although incomplete, the fable contains the basic truths intriguing the child. The child will express his truth by selecting a fable, by distributing roles, by choosing the mode of play.

An example of this is the play of a nine-year-old girl whose father committed

suicide with a hand gun. She tried to do the same with pills. She chose Little Red Riding Hood, and the way she played the story shows that hers was not a random choice. We play Little Red Riding Hood... She plays all the roles except her mother, but forgets the hunter in her story. I ask her how she would end the story with no hunter.

She thought for a moment, and then said that her mother would come and kill the wolf with a hand gun (in Little Red Riding Hood the hunter is the father figure).

Or... a stuttering boy with strong separation fears. He wants to play Wolf and the Seven Kids. I am to play the role of a kid and of his mother. A kid, the smallest one, does not hide under the clock but under the table... he tells me that he hides under the table when dad comes home drunk. But he also says that he feels sorry for the wolf and would not fill it with rocks (his mother says that the father, when he does not drink, devotes plenty of time to the boy).

Speech is taught in social communication, in everyday activities. According to Vygotsky (1983) external speech becomes inner speech through introjection. Play suffers the same fate. These manifestations never disappear but exist in the unconscious, change, get enriched, structured. But there is also a reverse process: development of awareness, the path from the unconscious to symbols. (The unconscious obviously has the characteristics of the weightless condition in which different objects meet, concepts are related to feelings and appear on the surface, sometimes in hardly recognisable form).

During therapy some children, as well as adults, cannot create symbols. For them symbols don't serve communication. This is the case in children with psychosomatic difficulties and behavioural disorders.

In my work I have been using for years an ensemble of puppets I made myself. It comprises the puppets described below.

The Bimbo puppet is an animating puppet; it is somewhat bigger, and differs from other puppets because it can move its lips. It got its name from a girl, and it is a mediator between me and the other puppets. It enables manifold communication: me-Bimbo, Bimbo-puppets, Bimbo-child.

The second group consists of male and female puppets of varying size and age, and the third of puppets symbolising bad things such as a witch, death, ghost, Dracula.

A special group are puppets used to symbolise stories and fables: queen, king, prince, princess, dragon, pirate, giant, wizard...

Boys like to use puppets representing persons in uniform, e.g., soldiers, cow-boys, policemen.

Then, there are puppets with a double face: sleeping-awake princess, sad-cheerful, ugly-beautiful... animal puppets: wolf (Fig. 2/p. 323), crocodile, cat, little dog, mice, cow, horse, pig... and a big and small glutton puppet – two indeterminate beings with quite an appetite.

The last group are puppets with sexual features (woman, man, boy, girl, pregnant woman which can bear a child).

The significance of some puppets can easily be changed by simple interventions, e.g., hide-and-seek puppets and turning puppets, very suitable for playing fables. I also introduced some fur puppets. Sometimes, in a therapeutic situation I create puppets together with children. The child can take the puppet home. Such a puppet is very important in therapy.

Recently I have started to introduce a screen for the shadow theatre and a small improvised stage – a box. Children fashion puppets and the stage from modelling clay. Flat puppets made by the children themselves from paper, and their drawings, can be used for the shadow theatre. Different forms of creativity are combined in this way: drawing, modelling, light play, text. The dictaphone and a camera are a must. Some children prefer radiodrama.

The technique is very simple. The child chooses the puppets, forms the story, assigns roles. Since many children never had any contact with puppets, they must be shown how to animate them. Some children need an initial boost. We can also communicate with the child by doing the “message play” with him. But while playing the child will also recognise a message without words. Interestingly enough, when the child emerges from the passive phase he/she can often enact play in a different way, enrich play or blend it with the problems affecting him/her.

Anything can be played through, e.g., dreams, own experiences, family situations; one can start from a specific story or comic strip. Even in a simple compilation of a TV serial we can recognise problems intriguing the child.

Technical problems apart (I mean, easier animation), the puppet need not be particularly adapted to the child's age. At another age the child will use in a different way. An example of that is a puppet I called “hide-and-seek pup-

pet". I designed it specially for a boy with selective mutism. A small boy stands within a sphere or, more precisely, two half-spheres which can be closed to form a sphere with a Velcro strap.

I enacted play in which I try to communicate with the boy in the sphere. I knock and ask him why he locked himself up. My co-player takes the puppet, first wants the doctor to open it, nobody else but the doctor (this is symbolic, because that was the first time he spoke, out of his home, in my therapy room with the help of puppets), but then he changes his decision and tells me that the boy should free himself on his own, it is a beautiful day outside and he should go and play... After that session his mother informed that he had spoken in school, for the first time. On the same day, in my therapy room, a boy a year and a half old, enjoyed playing "peak-a-boo" with that puppet. But a seventeen-year young man also recognised his similarity with the boy in the sphere... whenever a "hot number" (girl) appeared, he hid, escaped to his room.

In addition to this puppet, suitable for dialogue with children experiencing difficulties in communication or fears, I also produced a number of ambiguous puppets. Thus, the same girl is beautiful on one side and ugly on the other; another is sad or cheerful; the third has no mouth, i.e., has a mouth easily animated with hand movements; the fourth is concurrently a good boy and an imp. Why such puppets? Since I play with the children without any screen, such a puppet permits transformation during play. But that is at the same time a metaphoric message to the child about the multilayered nature of our mental life.

Puppets marked by specific negative properties protect the child from excessive or direct confrontation with unacceptable impulses. When using puppets during play we cannot neglect movement related to the speech of the puppet which its mouth. Some children spoke more easily by animating the mouth. Nevertheless, considerations related to speech and nonverbal expression would require a special analysis.

In everyday communication we send and receive many messages, and the underlying causes of difficulties can be various disorders in receiving, understanding and sending messages. However, messages can be confusing, ambiguous, incongruent or simply unintelligible. Of course, feelings are important. The child depends for a long time on others, on adults. The child very early on starts to follow the expression on the face of the person feeding him/her, learns to distinguish feelings, but also expresses them himself/herself demon-

strating satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Many messages are deciphered simultaneously. All these messages are associated, to a greater or smaller degree, with certain emotions. Most of the messages are sent by the face by mimic, and then by hands and the body. That means that in a face-to-face communication we must also recognise the feelings accompanying the contents of the message because it is only then that we can understand it adequately. All that is learned over a long time, since early childhood, first in interaction with parents, and in interaction with others. In undisturbed communication this process unfolds automatically. If there is a major disorder in the reception or understanding of the message, one withdraws into oneself. Children and mental patients find it difficult to read all the messages sent by the face and the body of an adult person. It is well known that psychotic patients and children with severe disorders cannot integrate all the components of a message. This is why puppets and masks are decidedly suitable for work with them because they eliminate the superfluous both in expression and in movement. We could say that they express the essential and simplify the world like a fable.

In working with children with difficulties in communication I have come to the conclusion that play with puppets is for them a tool of choice. Why that particular play? The puppet is close to the child with its symbolism, and playing with it the child finds it easier to deal with his/her own unacceptable phantasms and release the uncontrolled emotions related to conflicts. By participating in play created by the child the therapist accepts his/her phantasms, and through interpretation interrupts the vicious circle of guilt caused by these phantasms.

PUPPET WORKSHOPS

With the onset of war I left the psychotherapeutic room with my puppets and transferred to the refugee camps, trying to alleviate the grief and pain of traumatised children. However, soon it became necessary to educate the people working with such children. I believed that empirical workshops were the proper model serving the purpose. I called them KREMOK [Croatian acronym for “creative models of communication”]. Its participants studied specific items through the so-called “own skin experience”. That was not psychotherapy, but a path to expanding one’s own self by different models of creative communication. Such work facilitates release from conflicts and unresolved relationships with important persons from one’s childhood and youth. The process releases energy often blocked by these conflicts and unresolved re-

lationships. Once released, we become more prepared for encounter with others.

The structure and the programme of such workshops depend on the set objectives. In didactic workshops the participants in most cases produce puppets and stage small plays either on a given text or based on personal stories. Briefly, they get to know the puppets and their potentials.

Work with puppets in empirical workshops resembles a psychodrama. The immediate objective is not how to apply the puppet but how to express the different parts of the self by working on oneself. Of course, the puppet is only one of the possible ways, but its advantage lies in the fact that different puppets can symbolise different confronted parts of the self. Here is an example. In line with the synopsis of a young woman the participants performed the following play: the puppet produced by the woman and representing her appeared from behind a screen covered with plastic sheeting. It could hardly be recognised and it breathed heavily as it sought a way out. It couldn't find it. At the other end of the screen there was a three-headed dragon. Every head was animated by a different person. Whenever the puppet got close to the exit, the three dragon heads would utter a dissonant cry: "You must gorge yourself!" The puppet would back and the play started anew. Time passed more and more slowly, and anxiety grew. Finally, the author went to the screen, took the sheeting off the puppet and the puppet from the hands of the colleague who played it. That simple play symbolically represented her problem: the link between depressive moods and excessive eating, and the associated conflicts.

Psychodrama, playing with puppets and masks and pantomime are only some of the creative models of communication in which the players play with parts of their own self and, using symbols and metaphors, study items related to personal and group experience. Play is an unavoidable part of the process. Return to childhood is the basic condition for every creativity. Authentic encounter with the child in oneself enriches one's own self, but it is also the basic condition for genuine encounter with others.

Such workshops are accepted with equal enthusiasm by adults and children. Particularly valuable, in my mind, are workshops with joint participation of parents and children.

THE FIRST INTERVIEW

The first session with the child and the family appears to be, in my view, extremely important for the therapeutic process. In a relatively short time the therapist must find the way to connect two systems: the family system and his own, therapeutic system. The therapist is not merely a passive observer; he enters interaction with family members from the very beginning. By observing he acts, i.e., designs the therapeutic strategy. He follows what the family members are saying and their behaviour: family transactions can disclose many things, even family history. Nevertheless, however hard the therapist may try to be objective and exact, psychotherapy occurs in subjective space. In other words, he is also in the web of interrelationships, but also in the snare of his own unconscious. This poses the problem of coordinating individual psychodynamic and systemic-structural approach in practical work. In broader terms, even the psychodynamic approach to the problems of an individual includes the systemic approach because it observes the structure of the interrelationships between specific parts of the personality within the context of a disorder or difficulty. Therefore, observation covers the individual-family-society transactions, but also object relations within the individual. Transfer analysis is used to recognise the relations to important objects in the past and in the present. Diagnosis is the most important point in the first interview, and that implies recognition, understanding and interpretation of the problem. The methods used in treatment are selected only after that.

In order to acquire basic information on the family structure and the family life cycle I also use – in addition to the family interview – an ordinary family genogram and a group sculpture to which I shall devote some more space. I have been developing for years my idea of the group sculpture as a diagnostic and therapeutic tool. Briefly, it consists of about forty small wooden busts with which the family members arrange different family relationships as they personally see them. In relationships set so vividly we symbolically recognise nearness and distance, and the position held by individual members in the family hierarchy. Accordingly, each member arranges the group sculpture as he/she sees the family. This is a singular exteriorisation of the inner picture. The same method can also be applied if we want to find out the future changes anticipated by the family or any of its members. I also use the sculpture for representing the genogram and for communication among the members of the family, and for staging the trans-generational events.

After the first part of the interview with all the members of the family I pro-

ceed to dialogue with the child. We sit next to the trunk with the puppets. I brief the child on the puppets and together we discover how they are animated by playing short sequences. This is the opportunity for more direct and closer interaction. The child rarely refuses playing. Playing with puppets requires spontaneity. This means that the therapist need not be weighed down by rigid schemes or various pre-set objectives. Joint play with puppets can be compared with jazz in which improvisation, spontaneous response, is the best way to develop the joint melody. The co-player will also respond with his own spontaneity to the therapist's spontaneity, i.e., accept play.

Sometime the therapist is faced with a situation in which he must interpret "prematurely", shape play and thereby send to the child the message that he has understood his/her problem. The following example will maybe provide a better illustration of the case:

Mother brings Z., a girl of five, from a distant town. Reason: encopresis. In the period in which Z. was learning toilet habits, her mother was depressed because she lost her newborn, and Z. reacted by encopresis. Unfortunately, the staff of the kindergarten deepened the girl's trauma exposing her to the ridicule of other children in the group.

Z. stood in the corner of the room, completely apathetic and indifferent to all my endeavours to encourage her cooperation. I intuitively resorted to Maki Kaki. I offered it some modelling clay and it swallowed the clay with particular relish. After some time it began to wail that it had to go to the toilet and that, if they don't find a toilet for it, it would soil its pants right away. It finally found a spot in which it did the natural thing, with a sigh of relief and sounds imitating farts, and got rid of the clay. Thus relieved, it turned, satisfied, to see the results of its efforts. I introduced a lot of joy into the play but also a lot of onomatopoeia. This extremely regressive play left a strong impression both on the mother and on the girl. The girl laughed, looked at me and approached the puppet trunk, took Maki Kaki by the hand and repeated the same play several times. Just as many times before, I took intuitive action and I was obviously right. My approach also demonstrated the advantage of puppets over some other methods – the healing action which can be achieved already during the first interview.

The first interview is actually the door into psychotherapy. To be sure, it helps to glimpse, in the mist, some vague contours of the future joint voyage. It is used to collect data and create hypotheses on how the problem developed, but also opens up avenues to psychotherapy. Children with speech problems,

whether the case is selective mutism, stuttering or simply inhibition, recognise puppets as something close to them and something that might help them. This is a kind of love at first sight, as witnessed by M., a girl of eight.

M. was brought by her parents because of selective mutism that developed after her latest hospitalisation. She only talked to her mother and father. To the general amazement of the mother, present at the session, she spoke up as soon as she spotted the puppets. She immediately chose several puppets which began to talk. She treated me and her mother as her audience. I was not doctor Bastašić or Zlatko, but “the audience” and that meant I had to listen very carefully and watch her stage vignettes, abounding in substance and witty dialogues. She kept changing her accent and intonation depending on puppet appearance. During the first several sessions characters in her play included courtiers, soldiers, court jesters, and various animals, and eventually a love story involving a prince and a princess crystallised out of the process. The show ends with the princess having a baby and everybody celebrating. She then got up from the floor, sat at the table and sketched a drawing of a cradle with a baby in it, and next to it a girl called “Striped Being” who must look after a small boy while nobody cares about her. After that we talked about her jealousy and anger at her brother and mother as if that were something completely natural. Thus, with the help of puppets M. took therapy in her own hands and led me to the moment where her play reached the point of self-awareness, i.e., to the moment when we could talk about her problem. Her example is also interesting because she separated the space of play – the stage – from the space for dialogue. After we performed “guillectomy”, the symptoms disappeared, and M. began to play with children, phone and arrange meetings. During the subsequent session she kept releasing herself and increasingly expressing her creative potential. She only kept the structure of the session which is split into two parts every time: play on the floor with puppets and drawing at the table with dialogue in which she analyses the played material. At this point one could raise the question of what is healing in that play. Play in the presence of the mother has a different character than play without her. Like her mother, the therapist also provides support by active listening and watching (there is no theatre without an audience). Dialogue with her parents convinced me that no family or marital psychotherapy was necessary. The girl had to resolve on her own the unconscious conflicts arisen, among other things, by the birth of her brother and by starting to attend school. And why was therapy necessary, why couldn’t she solve those problems with the help of her parents? The reason is very simple: because her

parents were partly the substance of her conflicts.

In puppet play the therapist is at the very beginning much more active than in other forms of psychotherapy. Puppets protect the child because they can use them to play out various aspects of the self without any fear. As a boy wittily said after having swallowed several puppets. "I'm not mad or hungry, I am a wolf." And being gluttonous is part of wolf's nature, of having a wolf's appetite, and swallowing Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother time and time again. The child doesn't care if we, the therapists, see introjection or not in that action.

Structured in the way described above, the first interview introduces the co-player directly and very early into psychotherapy. The entire therapeutic process definitely depends on it. And that is what we should not forget: psychotherapy is a process in which the first interview opens the door for a new experience.

PSYCHOTHERAPY IS A PROCESS

Any psychotherapy of a child opens up numerous questions about the family. The therapist can indeed support the family pathology if he works exclusively with a child who is "the black sheep in the family". Such a coalition does not help either the family or the marked child. Even in individual psychotherapy the therapist must cooperate with the family, and very frequently with the institution, too, because in it the child can also become a "black sheep". Sometimes the therapist, if he judges that the other parts of the family system function without a problem, works only with the child.

In child psychotherapy I follow the basic postulates of psychodynamic psychotherapy analysing the relationships between the individual parts of personality but without neglecting family circumstances and transactions (Fig. 3/p. 323). Children's play, dreams and drawings often mirror trans-generationally introjected family relationships and conflicts interwoven with personal conflicts. The playing and analysis of these unconscious conflicts release the energy important for the development of personality. Owing to the expanded boundaries of the ego magic pre-logical processes are replaced by secondary logical processes. Although I personally let the child find his/her own way from the unconscious to the conscious, sometimes interpretations are unavoidable. Interpretation supported by puppets is less painful, it is not direct. Answering the question of how interpretations operate is not simple.

The task of the psychotherapist is to interpret the confused inner contents and relations with the world, and thereby enable the recognition of processes blocking flow, the avenue from the unconscious, from chaos to conscious order and meaning, and to open up the avenue to symbolisation. The therapist helps the child to understand what is happening to him/her, of course in keeping with the child's experience. Here play has an extremely important role, not only in terms of sublimation but also as a creative act: the child shapes with his/her own resources another reality, extrojected and therefore more recognisable. And play itself, through repetition, makes the solution of the problem possible. The extent of the interpretation of contents and transfer depends on the therapist and his orientation.

My psychotherapeutical beginnings are related to psychoanalysis, but later I came across different approaches: gestalt therapy, hypnotherapy, NLP, biodynamic therapy, etc. I was particularly attracted by the work of child hypnotherapists inspired by the teaching of M. Ericson. In it I recognised some elements of my own work.

In practice this theory discovers the link between metaphors and symptoms, and therapeutic interventions. The right half of the brain (in right-handed persons) controls our emotional and imaginative processes, and everything related to psychosomatics. In this context symptoms are also observed as a kind of metaphoric speech. Skilful use of metaphors can allow direct impact on the symptom through the right half of the brain. In this way analogies, metaphors, jokes, and fables can have a powerful effect because they activate the unconscious associative chain, which in turn influences the conscious and thereby promotes new solutions.

Sperry (according to Mills and Crowley 1986) presents the experience acquired by study of the brain. Each hemisphere processes information in its own way, but both are capable of combining the experiences. Speech is the synergistic product of both hemispheres. The left hemisphere processes experience sequentially and logically, and the right one integrally and comprehensively. The right side is decisive for decoding the metaphor. EEG records show that the left hemisphere is the most active in reading and using technical writing, and the right one in decoding the pictorial.

Hypnotherapy is focused on unconscious resources and their positive potential which, for some reason, some children do not use in development and learning. In order to reach such resources at all, the child must be brought in a state of trance, a state in which attention is focused inwards, on one's

personal wealth which promotes growth and development. Contact with our own positive potential, strength and experience helps us to master the problems affecting us.

CONCLUSION

In his *Münchhausens Zopf*, published in 1992, Paul Watzlawick muses about the increasingly digitalised world. About children that have never seen the old cuckoo clock, the hands of a clock or watch, children that spend most of their leisure sitting in front of a computer. The large quantity of information flooding us from various screens is not in any way equal to knowledge. The effect of such abundant information is most frequently the opposite: instead of enriching, it impoverishes. This is clearly seen in children, screen addicts, who have forgotten personal creativity, whose world is narrowing down to what games offer them. Although concerned, Watzlawick sees a way out in small steps. During my long-standing work I have tried to restore, at least to some extent, the analog world the children by using play with puppets and other creative models of communication. In doing so I have also discovered the beauty of puppet art. To this continuous work I can add many workshops with parents, teachers and all the people involved in educating and teaching children.

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